EQUALITY.

A

SERMON

ON 2 COR. VIII. 14.

PREACHED AT THE

Methodist-Chapel, Broad-Mead,

BRISTOL,

February 28, 1794.

BY SAMUEL BRADBURN.

Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?—*Malachi.*

——Equal Lot
May join us, equal Joy, as equal Love.——*Milton.*

Bear ye one anothers burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.—*Paul.*

Bristol:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY LANCASTER AND EDWARDS,
REDCLIFF-STREET:

SOLD ALSO BY W. BROWNE, AND J. PENLEY, BOOKSELLERS;
AND AT THE METHODIST-CHAPELS.

[*PRICE FOUR-PENCE.*]

BRITISH MUSEUM

PREFACE.

THE common-place reaſon, aſſigned by authors for the publication of their compoſitions, namely —*the importunity of their friends*, is the beſt excuſe I can make for publiſhing the following Sermon. As I did not write one page of it till ſeveral weeks after it was preached, it is poſſible there may be ſome variation in the language, but I think I have recollected every Idea, which is the chief point. In a few places I have added a little, to illuſtrate what I before delivered, and have changed two or three expreſſions which were thought too ſtrong. If I have borrowed any thing which is not acknowledged, it was not with deſign. In reading a vaſt number of books, (every intelligent perſon will allow) it is not eaſy always to diſtinguiſh our own thoughts, nor even words, from thoſe of others: There are a few quotations from Blackſtone's Commentaries; and ſome thoughts from different authors on religious liberty, which are not marked, on account of their being mixed with thoughts of

my own. I hope mentioning this, once for all, will be ſufficient. What I have ſaid, concerning Toleration, which ſome may think ſevere, is ſufficiently guarded by what goes before and follows. The empire of conſcience is ſacred to the "Judge of all the earth;" and therefore it is of ſerious conſequence for any man, either to give up his conſcience to another, or to ſuffer another to give up his conſcience to him: and he who is ſenſible of the neceſſity of preſerving inviolably this important truſt, will not be offended at what I have written on the ſubject.

One good end may be anſwered by this little publication, it will ſhew that a firm adherence to the principles of unlimited religious liberty, is perfectly conſiſtent with a ſteadfaſt attachment to our King, whom I earneſtly pray God to bleſs, and our civil conſtitution, which in itſelf is excellent, and of which I highly approve.

I beg the reader not to judge of the whole by a ſingle paſſage, till he has read it through. He will then be better qualified to condemn or approve.

BRISTOL, *May* 22, 1794.

A SERMON,

A SERMON, &c.

2 Cor. viii. 14.

——*That there may be Equality.*

THE changes which take place, in the courſe of a few years, in the various concerns of mankind, are not more ſurpriſing than the difference, which an alteration of circumſtances, in a ſhort time, will produce in human language, and that both with reſpect to the meaning and importance of words. To be convinced of this, we need only to obſerve that part of our own hiſtory which relates to our political diviſions.

When the minds of men are influenced by ſelf intereſt or party rage, their expreſſions vary with their ſituation. Some accidental circumſtance produces a new word, or gives an old one a new meaning which greatly increaſes its importance. Hence ſome words and phraſes, for the time being, are almoſt idolized, while others, with equal warmth, are perfectly execrated: ſome grow obſolete, and are laid aſide; and others riſe into repute; and, by their being particularly applied for a time, become of ſufficient note to denominate (not only parties, but) whole nations. Trifling as theſe obſervations may at firſt appear, a little conſideration will convince us of their real weight, ſince nothing is inſignificant which may be productive of great conſequences.

When we read in the Hiſtory of England, the names by which contending parties have diſtinguiſhed each other, ſuch as *Cavaliers* and *Round-heads*, *Petitioners* and *Abhorrers*, *Whigs* and *Tories*, and when we conſider how odious any of theſe appellations rendered thoſe to whom they were applied, in the eſteem of the oppoſite party, it will not be thought a matter of indifference, by what names we are called, or what phraſes we make uſe of. Some of theſe party-names are now unintelligible, except to reading people, and no paſſion is excited by their being mentioned. But there are other words adopted in their room, which are reciprocally applied with equal virulence. For inſtance, who would

have thought, but a few years ago, that the words *Republican*, and *Loyalist* would ever have been uſed in England as they are at preſent? If a man now ſay any thing in defence of the privileges of the people, eſpecially if he name the "Rights of man," he is immediately termed a REVOLUTIONIST, and conſidered by many as an enemy to all ſubordination, and as deſirous of overturning the State. On the other hand, if a man expreſs his love to the King and the laws of his country, and diſcover a wiſh to ſuppreſs unruly people, for fear of their doing miſchief, he is called an ALARMIST, and repreſented as wiſhing to deſtroy liberty and to eſtabliſh deſpotiſm. That there may be men in the nation who would exalt the royal prerogatives above all law, is poſſible: and there may be thoſe who would level all orders of men, and overturn the ſtate: But I hope the number of either is ſmall, as they are alike enemies to our conſtitution. Whether it was by the contrivance of either of theſe parties, or by mere accident, that the word EQUALITY became aſſociated with the word LIBERTY, I know not; but it is certain much confuſion has been cauſed thereby. Liberty has, in one way or other, employed the pens of hundreds, and has been ſufficiently explained: but the word EQUALITY is ſtill ambiguous. In ſome reſpects men are equal, in other they are not, and in ſome they may or may not be ſo. As the word is ſcriptural, and therefore ought to be explained; and as it is now important, and will furniſh us with abundance of matter ſuitable to the preſent occaſion, I ſhall avail myſelf of this opportunity, and endeavour to ſhew,

I. In what reſpects all mankind are perfectly equal:

II. Wherein an exact equality is impoſſible; And

III. Wherein mankind may or may not be equal.

I. And firſt, I am to ſhew, wherein all mankind are perfectly equal.

1. It is certain they are all equally *creatures*.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth;" and Man, in particular was the work of his hands. The prophet Malachi urges this fact as an argument againſt the wicked prieſts, who dealt treacherouſly with the people of God—"Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us?" And it ought always to have weight with us: It is a humbling conſideration; a little while ago I was nothing! I had no more being than the meaneſt

meaneſt reptile! The ſame divine power that produced me, produced alſo the loweſt and leaſt of inſects; and, conſidered with relation to God, I am no way ſuperior to them, let alone to mankind; for all are equally his creatures; made as he ſaw good, by his own ſovereign will and power. It is true, in one ſenſe, there is ſomething pleaſing in the thought—a wiſe and good being made us; and therefore we mention it in our prayers, to enliven out devotion—"Be ye ſure that the Lord he is God; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourſelves." And David pleads it with God in his prayer for underſtanding—"Thy hands have made and faſhioned me; give me underſtanding that I may learn thy commandments." But the thoughts of our being God's creatures, can only be pleaſing to a pious mind, as they flow from divine grace in the heart; and this no way weakens the force of what I have advanced, that, as we are all creatures, we are all perfectly equal.

2. Mankind are all equal with reſpect to their total depravity, through the ſin of our firſt parents. "By one man ſin entered into the world, and death by ſin; and ſo death paſſed upon all men, for that all have ſinned." As ALL never did ſin perſonally, by an actual tranſgreſſion of any known law, the meaning can only be, that, they fell in Adam: and to this agree the following words, "By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation—as by one man's diſobedience they were made ſinners." In this ſenſe mankind are perfectly equal; "There is no difference, for all have ſinned, and come ſhort of the glory of God." This is a mortifying reflexion to human pride; "Every mouth muſt be ſtopped, that all the world may become (ſubject to the judgment of, and appear) guilty before God."

3. As all are equally partakers of the univerſal corruption of our nature, ſo all are under the ſame neceſſity of being ſaved by the free grace of God, through Chriſt Jeſus, without which we can do nothing but ſin. The plan of human redemption, laid by "the determinate counſel and foreknowledge of God" muſt ſtand. The ſum of this is, that Jeſus Chriſt the Lord of glory, "was delivered for our offences, and was raiſed again for our juſtification." —Neither is there ſalvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we muſt be ſaved."

Here is an Equality which levels all diſtinctions, and lays our honour in the duſt. "By the deeds of the law, there ſhall no fleſh be juſtified." "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jeſus Chriſt," are eſſentially neceſſary to our being juſtified; and there is no exception, under the goſpel diſpenſation, in favour of any. Therefore ALL muſt "repent and believe the goſpel," in order to their receiving the kingdom of God, or they muſt periſh eternally.

4. Without holineſs no man can ſee the Lord. Here alſo all are equal—all who enter into heaven, muſt be born again—their hearts muſt be changed, and they muſt become new creatures. The ſanctification of our nature is indiſpenſibly neceſſary to our enjoying the pure pleaſures which are at God's right hand. And if this be neceſſary, in the nature of things, for any one man, it is, and muſt be ſo, for all men, for as much as all are born alike. Equality in this particular, is truly alarming, if we look at the world in general: How few comparatively lay it to heart, ſo as to be determined by the grace of God, to "cleanſe themſelves from all filthineſs of the fleſh and ſpirit, perfecting holineſs in the fear of God!" O ye, who are called after the name of Chriſt, let this awful truth ſink deep into your ſouls—the day is coming when nothing but the image of God will be conſidered as the proof of your being heirs of glory.

5. The elements which are neceſſary to the being and ſupport of any one man, are neceſſary to the being and ſupport of all. Without the air, the earth, the fire, and the water, how could one exiſt more than another? In this ſenſe then, there is Equality. And the due conſideration of this, ought never to be out of our minds. There may be a natural difference in climates, and artificial means may be uſed by ſome, to make their ſituation ſomewhat more agreeable; but does any one breathe another air than is breathed by all? Is there any other ſun to warm one than another? The ſame earth and water, however they may be variouſly compounded, are the common ſources of ſuſtenance to all. No doubt the Almighty could ſupport man without the uſe of any means; but till it be proved that he does thus ſupport ſome, and thereby diſtinguiſh them from others, we conclude from fact againſt poſſibility, that herein all are equal.

6. "It

6. "It is appointed unto men once to die." What an Equality is this! To be "free among the dead," a denizon of that commonwealth, where all difference is at an end; where it may be ſaid to each, "the worms are ſpread under thee, and the worms cover thee." What a concluſion of earthly greatneſs is here! The wiſe man dieth even as the fool; and "that which befalleth the ſons of men, befalleth beaſts, even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, ſo dieth the other, yea, they have all one breath, ſo that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beaſt: for all is vanity. All go to one place, all are of the duſt, and all turn to duſt again." What medicine or human ſkill may do for a ſhort ſeaſon, is ſcarcely worth naming; for, "there is no man hath power over the ſpirit to retain the ſpirit; neither hath he power in the day of death; and there is no diſcharge in that war, neither ſhall wickedneſs deliver thoſe that are given to it!" no, nor the ſtricteſt piety—Death knows no diſtinction between good and evil, all muſt yield to his reſiſtleſs power.

7. But this is not the laſt thing in which all are equal. After death, follows the judgment of the great day, where there will be "no reſpect of perſons." A terrible equality this to the haughty ſpirit of "all the proud, and all that do wickedly." How different from any thing that ever was ſeen among the children of men! The people of every age, and of all nations aſſembled before the dread tribunal of the impartial "Judge of all the earth!" So St. Paul informs us, "We muſt all appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt; that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Did mankind but ſeriouſly reflect on the coming of Chriſt, and the account they are to give for all the talents with which they were entruſted, it would not be poſſible for them to live as they generally do. And remembering the Equality that will then take place, would ſurely prevent their being either puffed up, or caſt down, on account of any worldly titles or qualifications, that may at preſent diſtinguiſh one mortal from another.

8. Thus far Equality has been conſidered in a way not much regarded, although in ſeveral reſpects of great moment, having conſiderable influence upon our conduct, as moral and religious characters. But there are other reſpects in which all men are

perfectly

perfectly equal: THEY HAVE ALL AN EQUAL AND ABSOLUTE RIGHT TO IMPARTIAL JUSTICE. No man has a right from God to injure another in his *person*, *property*, or *character*. Our Saviour's words are clear and eaſy to be underſtood—"All things whatſoever you would that men ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo to them: for this is the law and the prophets." And from this law there is no appeal: The obligations to *juſtice* are univerſally, and invariably binding. Upon this principle the whole ſcience of juriſprudence is founded. This is an unalienable *Right of man from man*. Nor will it be eaſy to find words which convey the meaning better than that phraſe which has been ſo much abuſed, "The rights of man:" The running title of the firſt Book of Blackſtone's Commentaries on the Laws of England is, "The Rights of Perſons," which is the ſame thing. And, though *words* are of little conſequence but as they imply things; yet, as things are ſo connected with words, on many ſubjects, that the giving up a word may imply giving up the thing; it is worth while to conſider, whether any one need, or ought to inſiſt upon another's abandoning an expreſſion, unleſs he actually intend to make him abandon the thing which ſuch an expreſſion ſignifies? This obſervation took its riſe from ſome having audaciouſly aſſerted, that, "Man has no rights!" An aſſertion that, if ſtrictly attended to, amounts to downright TREASON. For, if man, that is, *mankind*, have *no rights*, then no order of men can have any; as excluding a thing entirely from a *whole*, neceſſarily excludes it from the *ſeveral parts*. This is ſtriking at the root of all order and government, and opening the way for rebellion, anarchy, and all the miſeries that man can bring on man. Only prove that man has no rights, it follows of neceſſity that no man can be wronged. If he have no right to civility and reſpect, he cannot be wronged by affronts and ſcurrility.—If he have no right to liberty and property, he cannot be wronged by being plundered and enſlaved.—If he have no right to the titles and dignity of an office, how can he be wronged by being deprived thereof?—In ſhort, if a man have no right to life; he is not wronged by being murdered. Injuſtice only exiſts by its oppoſite. If then mankind have not an abſolute right to ſtrict and impartial juſtice from their fellow creatures, in every poſſible caſe, there can be no ſuch thing as injuſtice in what-

ever

ever treatment any may meet with from the worſt of men. Dreadful effects may be produced even from intimations of this kind, which have ſo manifeſt a tendency to weaken our obligations to moral virtue. But,

9. However venerable the word JUSTICE may appear, and however highly it may be eſteemed as the natural, and equal right of every individual of the human ſpecies, which it certainly is; yet, there is a ſenſe in which it is peculiarly and moſt ſacredly ſo; and in which all mankind are perfectly and entirely in kind and degree, on equality with each other; namely, UNLIMITED, UNCONTROLED LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE; that is, an abſolute, indefeaſible right to think and determine for themſelves in every thing purely religious. In other words it is the unalienable birthright of every human being to chooſe his own religion, and to worſhip God as he pleaſes; provided that he behave himſelf with propriety in all things relating to the community. But if a man mix different ſubjects with his religion, which are of evil tendency to others, and ſuffer from the civil power on this account, this is not perſecution, he ſuffers juſtly as an "evil-doer, and as a buſy-body in other men's matters." (1 Pet. iv. 15.) But if a number of people, or an individual, ſimply wiſh to think of God as well as they can, and to worſhip him in their own way, can any man interfere by coercive meaſures, without exalting himſelf in the temple of God, and uſurping the dominion of conſcience, which is the ſacred prerogative of the Moſt High? (2 Theſ. ii. 4.) The man who would fine or impriſon another, for praying or preaching, would not ſcruple to carry his point further, nor be ſatisfied but with the death of thoſe who oppoſed him; burning them alive is only the ſame principle operating with greater energy. It is in vain to urge, that force may be of uſe to reclaim ignorant, refractory people: Perſecution may make hypocrites; but it never did, it never will make rational converts to pure and undefiled religion. The utmoſt length that mortal beings have any right to go, in ſtriving to make others think and act as they do on religious ſubjects, is to reaſon with, and perſuade them, by affectionate words and ſound arguments.

While a man approves himſelf a good citizen, have either Popes or Biſhops—Councils or Convocations—Parliaments or Kings, the leaſt

leaſt authority from God, to interrupt him in the exerciſe of his religion? Even Parents, who are accountable to God for the way in which they educate their Children, have no power to reſtrain and compel them in religious concerns, after they become accountable for their own conduct. Parents are commanded to bring up their children in the inſtruction and diſcipline of the Lord; but there is no direction given reſpecting them, when they are able to judge for themſelves.

It has been objected, (to the reproach of ſuch objectors) that "Civil Governors ought to *force* people to be *religious*; yea, and to be of *one religion*," becauſe the Kings of Iſrael were authoriſed to deſtroy idolators, and were blamed for their negligence when they did not. But there is no reſemblance in the caſes, and therefore no argument can be drawn from the compariſon. Not only the matter, but the *mode* alſo of the Jewiſh worſhip was poſitively enjoined, and both were of a peculiar nature, referring to a higher diſpenſation, and conſiſting in outward ſhadows of good things to come; and it was neceſſary to preſerve theſe exactly as God had directed them, on the account of their being *typical*.* But Idolatry tended to deſtroy the order of theſe, and ſo to break the connexion and defeat the deſign, it was therefore neceſſary to deſtroy Idolators: Whereas Chriſtianity is perfectly conſiſtent with a variety of modes of worſhip, and of different religious opinions, being of a ſpiritual nature, and referring to no diſpenſation beyond itſelf. Again the Jewiſh religion and their ſtate polity were ſo interwoven, that to vary one was to endanger both: and if no other reaſon could be aſſigned, the divine mandate was a ſufficient authority for their conduct. But who can produce ſuch authority now for forcing Chriſtians to conform againſt their conſciences? Beſides the religion of the goſpel is ſo ſimple and pure, that it cannot be connected with politics, without ſuffering greatly by ſuch a junction. Moreover as the "kingdom of Chriſt is not of this world," and therefore his ſervants do not fight; (John xviii. 36.) it is plain his kingdom, that is, genuine religion, does not need the aſſiſtance of human power, nor human policy, either to ſupport its being, or to further its propogation.

Nay,

* See Heb. x. 1.

Nay, pure religion is ſo far from ſtanding in need of ſuch helps, that all the exertions of human authority, enforced by all the terrors of an inquiſition or a biſhop's court, do irreparable miſchief to genuine piety, ſo far as they are ſuffered to interfere.

Many who have been aſhamed to defend actual perſecution, have ſuppoſed, that they ſettled this point ſo as to give general ſatisfaction, by declaring in favour of *Toleration*. But the beſt that can be ſaid in favour of Toleration is, that it is *tolerable*. That it may be borne, where obtaining redreſs is impracticable. This, it will be allowed, is ſaying very little in its favour; but the more cloſely the ſubject is examined, the more clearly it will appear, that it admits of no better defence. Toleration in religion proceeds from uſurped authority: for in reaſon, and agreeable to the Scriptures, as all men are equally accountable to the ſupreme Judge, according to the light and opportunities with which they have been favoured, any individual has an equal right to tolerate another, that another has to tolerate him. And, by parity of reaſon, each has the ſame right to be intolerant. What is ſaid of individuals, is equally true of any given number. Hence a nation, or any body of people, ſetting up their own ſyſtem of opinions, or plan of church-government as a *teſt*, and requiring others to conform thereto, under certain penalties if they do not, is as much an uſurpation of another's right, as if one man did ſo by his neighbour; and differs only in degrees of criminality, being ſo much more an evil, as reſiſtance is leſs effectual. The crime of robbery and murder is not leſſened, but rather increaſed, becauſe committed by a banditti, inſtead of a ſingle villain. Beſide, after all that has been ſaid to the contrary, the giving a man leave to worſhip God, does imply the blaſphemous oppoſite—the giving God leave to be worſhipped. For, only put the queſtion, Is the man hindered to worſhip God? common ſenſe demonſtrates, that God cannot receive the worſhip which the man is hindered to give him. In what an awful ſtate then are perſecutors! Any who thruſt themſelves between a rational, immortal ſpirit, and the God to whom alone it is accountable! Yet, where is the nation that has been always free from this horrid crime? Pagans, Jews, Mahometans, Papiſts, Proteſtants have perſecuted, and have been perſecuted, as they roſe or ſunk in worldly power. All owing either to the unnatural connexion of temporal intereſt with peculiar

modes of religion; or to the pride and ignorance of mankind; Ignorance cauſing them to place religion, not in loving God and their neighbour, but in notions, and the external forms of worſhip; and pride prompting them to make proſelytes. Having mean, unworthy conceptions of God, is the cauſe of ſuperſtition and bigotry; and perſecution when not political, is their genuine offspring. The only remedy for the evils attendant on this monſter, is to baniſh the principles which produce it: particularly, in every civilized country, to deſtroy the notion of men tolerating each other. Leave the human mind free to exerciſe, as it ſees good, the right of private judgment in matters of faith and worſhip; for HEREIN ALL MANKIND ARE PERFECTLY EQUAL; and all who object to this are perſecutors in principle, whatever may be their conduct.

II. Thus we ſee in what reſpects mankind are equal.

I proceed, ſecondly to ſhew wherein Equality is, in the preſent ſtate of things, impoſſible. I ſay, in the preſent ſtate of things; for there is no natural neceſſity, why men might not be perfectly and conſtantly equal in all things. But as God in his infinite wiſdom hath ordered, or permitted things to be as they are, there muſt be inequality.

1. Mankind are not phyſically equal; their powers of both ſoul and body are exceedingly different. The ſtrength or weakneſs of the ſolid parts of the body, together with the variation of the fluids, occaſioning a good or bad conſtitution, depend upon innumerable ſecond cauſes, which produce ſo great a variety, that it may be doubted, whether there ever were two human bodies exactly alike, either when they were born, or during the whole period of their exiſtence. And ſuch is the cloſe connexion of our ſouls and bodies, that the one greatly affects the other. The brain, which is the ſource of ſenſe and motion, being various in its ſize and form, muſt cauſe an amazing difference in our intellectual faculties. And though the Supreme Being can over-rule the natural tendency of any ſecond cauſe, ſo that no effects, or contrary effects ſhall be produced; yet, as he never waſtes miracles, we generally ſee an agreement betwixt the end and the means. We obſerve a difference of capacity and inclination in little children. Quickneſs and dulneſs of apprehenſion, ſtrength and weakneſs of memory, chearfulneſs and heavineſs of temper, and numberleſs

other

other differences, are eaſily perceivable before reaſon or education are concerned. And it is, beyond a doubt, impoſſible for the utmoſt exertions of reaſon, aſſiſted by the beſt education, to produce what we term *genius*. Hence we ſay a man muſt be born a poet, a painter, a muſician, or he can never excel in thoſe fine arts. And not only arts and ſciences of a refined nature, but the common employments of life often diſcover the peculiar propenſities with which different men were born, and which like a kind of inſtinct, or reſiſtleſs inclination have determined them to engage in their various callings. This ſhews us the wiſdom and love of God, in thus providing for his creatures, being no ſmall proof of a particular providence; and at the ſame time demonſtrates that there is an INEQUALITY in human nature, independant on any changes which take place in this life.

2. This unequal diſtribution of natural talents among mankind was neceſſary to their comfort and ſafety. The weakneſs and conſtantly returning wants of man, beſide the ſufferings to which he is expoſed (to ſay nothing of ſympathy, and the involuntary emotions of love) are plain indications that he was formed for ſociety. God's work was not complete while man was alone. But the wants of man cannot be ſupplied, nor his ſufferings alleviated by ſociety without a diverſity of qualifications. And who does not know that this diverſity has been diſcovered in every nation under heaven of whom we have heard or read, and that in all ages? Though it is true, the advantage of it has often been ſmall for want of improvement. As early as the time of Cain and Abel there were different employments; "Abel was a keeper of ſheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground." And this variety increaſed in proportion to the increaſe of their poſterity: "Jabel was the father of ſuch as dwell in tents, and of ſuch as have cattle. And his brother's name was Jubal: he was the father of all ſuch as handle the harp and organ.—And Tubal-cain was an inſtructer of every artificer in braſs and iron."* While the number of men was ſmall, and they had the whole earth to range in, as the wants of ſimple nature were but few, and theſe could be eaſily ſupplied, leſs attention was neceſſary to the refinements of life, which

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* I avoid all critical obſervations on theſe paſſages, as being foreign to my preſent purpoſe.

therefore were probably not much known. In ſuch a ſituation the inequality between man and man would not be ſo great, as when they multiplied on the earth. But even then, we ſee from the above paſſages, a conſiderable inequality, which quickly increaſed, occaſioned by their ſundry inventions and occupations. They ſoon began to build cities, and to form themſelves into communities. New wants were diſcovered, in conſequence of a refinement in their taſte and manners, which multiplied the employments of men, in order to ſupply their wants and gratify their curioſity. Faſhion and ornament were added to utility, in dreſs, buildings and furniture. Men "ſought out many inventions," which more and more diverſified their ſtations in life, and placed them at ſtill further diſtances from each other.

3. A natural conſequence of a variety in men's powers and employments, was an inequality in their PROPERTY. If a man had more knowledge, and was more diligent, he would be able, by invention and activity to acquire more wealth than the man that was inferior to him in theſe reſpects. Hence the being knowing or ignorant, rich or poor, ſoon became marked diſtinctions among mankind. The learned themſelves are not agreed when money firſt became the grand medium of commerce, nor is it of any conſequence to us. Of this we are ſure that the riches of the early ages did not conſiſt in gold, ſilver and other metals; but in articles proper for immediate uſe. It is not my preſent buſineſs to inquire into the various ways whereby ſome people accumulate riches now; the moral cauſes will not bear the light. But it may be pleaſing to obſerve briefly, how the right of property was firſt veſted in individuals, and of courſe deſcended to poſterity.

In the beginning of the world, we are informed by holy writ, the all-bountiful Creator gave to man "dominion over all the earth; and over the fiſh of the ſea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." This is the only true and ſolid foundation of man's dominion over external things, whatever airy metaphyſical notions may have been ſtarted by fanciful writers upon the ſubject. The earth therefore, and all things therein, are the general property of mankind, being the gift of the Creator. And, while the earth continued bare of inhabitants, it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that all was in common among them,

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and that every one took from the public ſtock to his own uſe ſuch things as his immediate neceſſities required. Theſe general notions of property were then ſufficient to anſwer all the purpoſes of human life; and might perhaps ſtill have anſwered them had it been poſſible for mankind to have remained in a ſtate of primeval ſimplicity. The ground was in common, and no part of it was the permanent property of any man in particular; yet whoever was in the occupation of any determined ſpot of it, for reſt, for ſhade, or the like, acquired for the time a ſort of ownerſhip, from which it would have been unjuſt, and contrary to the law of nature to have driven him by force; but the inſtant that he quitted the uſe or occupation of it, another might ſeize it without any injuſtice.

But when mankind increaſed in number, craft, and ambition, it became neceſſary to entertain conceptions of more permanent dominion; and to appropriate to individuals not the immediate uſe only, but the very *ſubſtance* of the thing to be uſed. Otherwiſe innumerable tumults muſt have ariſen, and the good order of the world been continually broken and diſturbed, while a variety of perſons were ſtriving who ſhould get the firſt occupation of the ſame thing, or diſputing which of them had actually gained it. In the caſe of habitations and furniture in particular, a property was very ſoon eſtabliſhed in every man's houſe and moveables. As the moſt valuable part of their property conſiſted in cattle, extenſive tracts of land became neceſſary to provide food for theſe, and fences to keep them from going aſtray, which in time determined the boundaries of real eſtates. In the choice of their ſituation, *water* was an article of great importance. And therefore the book of Geneſis (the moſt venerable monument of antiquity, conſidered merely with a view to hiſtory) will furniſh us with frequent inſtances of violent contentions concerning wells. Thus we find Abraham, who was but a ſojourner, aſſerting his right to a well in the country of Abimelech, and exacting an oath for his ſecurity, "becauſe he had digged the well." And Iſaac about ninety years afterwards, reclaimed this his father's property: and, after much contention with the Philiſtines, was ſuffered to enjoy it in peace. The queſtion, what gave a man an excluſive right to retain in a permanent manner that ſpecific land, which before belonged generally to every body, but particularly to nobody, has employed the pens of the ableſt

writers

writers on natural law: And, though they differ in ſome reſpects on the point, they all ſeem to agree in this, that as occupancy gave him a right to the *temporary use* of the ſoil, ſo occupancy gave him the original right to the *ſubſtance* of the earth itſelf, and was a ſufficient title to him and his poſterity.

From this view of the ſubject, it is eaſy to obſerve what an amazing inequality muſt take place among mankind, in regard to poſſeſſions. Nor would the ſtamping an imaginary value on gold and ſilver (metals otherwiſe of little value) tend to leſſen this inequality. Accordingly we read that "Abraham, was very rich in cattle, in ſilver, and in gold." And ſoon after, that he could command three hundred and eighteen trained ſervants, who were born in his houſe; (Gen. xiv. 14.) and that he actually led them forth to battle againſt the kings who had taken Lot captive. And by tracing the hiſtories of all civilized nations, as far as they have been known, we find the ſame inequality prevailing—the ſame cauſe producing the ſame effects. And for any number of men to attempt an equalization in this particular, is only like the builders of Babel, to render themſelves memorable by their folly.

What is recorded concerning the primitive Chriſtians is not at all in point; their ſituation was peculiar to themſelves, "They had all things common" for a ſhort time. But this was not by the command of God, nor with an eye to their being equal in reſpect to property; but a circumſtance which aroſe from the nature of things. Jeruſalem was then ſubject to the Romans, and, according to the predictions of Chriſt (as underſtood by the Chriſtians) was ſoon to be deſtroyed. Perſecution raged againſt the diſciples with the greateſt fury. All temporal things were conſidered of little value; firſt, becauſe they were of ſuch precarious tenure, and were likely ſoon to be taken from their owners; Secondly, if not, the owners were in danger of being deſtroyed by their perſecutors, and their eſtates confiſcated, they therefore did good while in their power. But, thirdly, if neither of theſe had been the caſe, ſuch was the love which the Chriſtians had to each other, that, diſregarding every thing elſe, they were prompted to part with all things ſooner than any one ſhould be in want. Such a ſtate was not likely to continue long: nor was it neceſſary it ſhould: and therefore the Chriſtians were never blamed when it ceaſed. They were only exhorted as

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in the paſſage connected with our text. "For I mean not that other men be eaſed and you burdened: But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a ſupply for their want, and that their abundance alſo may be a ſupply for your want, that there may be equality. As it is written, He that had gathered much, had nothing over; and he that had gathered little, had no lack." The plain meaning of which is, that the Chriſtians at Corinth who were rich, ſhould out of their abundance ſupply the wants of the poor brethren in Judea; and if ever the Corinthians ſhould be in want, and thoſe of Judea ſhould abound, they ſhould be equally ready to relieve them, that there might be no want on one ſide, and no ſuperfluity on the other. And wherever the love of God and our neighbour is experienced, it will always produce ſuch an equality as this. So St. John—"Whoſo hath this world's good, and ſeeth his brother have need, and ſhutteth up his bowels of compaſſion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" But this has nothing to do with *levelling* mankind in regard to their ſubſtance, nay, it is a manifeſt proof of the right of property in individuals; which indeed was acknowledged by St. Peter when reaſoning with Ananias, even at the time the church had all things common: "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghoſt, and to keep back part of the price of the land? (pretending that the whole was given.) Whiles it remained, was it not *thine own?* and after it was ſold, was it not in *thine own power?*" That is, thou hadſt even then power to give the money or to withhold it. St. Paul and St. James mention the *rich* and *poor*, without the leaſt intimation that there ſhould be no ſuch diſtinctions. And if juſtice and mercy were uniformly attended to, this difference would be no juſt ground of complaint. But when oppreſſion and cruelty prevail on one hand, what can be expected but diſſatisfaction, envy and hatred on the other?

4. To prevent the evil conſequences which might ariſe from an inequality of property, it ſoon became neceſſary for certain regulations to be formed, to aſcertain and defend the juſt rights of every individual. Such regulations at firſt we may eaſily conceive to have been few and ſimple; but in proportion, as mankind increaſed in wickedneſs, artful men found ways to evade the force of theſe regulations. This led the parties concerned to add to the number

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of their rules or reſolutions, and to enlarge, and in various reſpects alter and amend thoſe they had made before, until they became a regular body of LAWS. But however excellent laws might be, they could only be binding either by *principle* or *compulſion*. Where principle was deſtroyed or diſregarded, and men injured each other by fraud or violence, compulſory meaſures became indiſpenſable. Thus an *executive* power was committed to men of ſuppoſed worth, and added to the *legiſlative*; and thus mankind were rendered *unequal* in another ſenſe, being divided into GOVERNORS and THE GOVERNED.

Our preſent limits will not permit me to treat of the various ſyſtems of Government, which different countries have adopted; nor does it properly belong to the point in hand. Let the mode of government be what it may, it is impoſſible for it to be of any ſervice but as it is operative; being ſupported, and rendered efficacious by a forcible and vigorous agency. And whoever are entruſted with legal authority, whether ſupreme or ſubordinate, comparative degrees of greatneſs will be annexed to their offices, which will reduce equality of rank much more than any of the preceeding conſiderations. But this ſhould not be conſidered as an evil in itſelf. St. Paul's reaſoning concerning the "ſpiritual gifts" of the Corinthian Church, may without any impropriety, be applied to this ſubject. Comparing the community to the human body, he argues "If the foot ſhall ſay, Becauſe I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear ſhall ſay, Becauſe I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?—If they were all one member, where were the body?" His deſign was to prevent or remove jealouſy and envy on the one hand, and pride and contempt on the other: ſo that perſons differently qualified might, like the various members of the body, contribute to the wellbeing of the community. Nor can we conceive a more apt illuſtration of a well regulated nation; the head being the ſeat of dominion and influence, the eyes and ears are fit emblems of the knowledge and attention of thoſe who have the management of public affairs, and the hands and feet repreſent the activity of the people at large, engaged ten thouſand different ways, each doing ſomething towards the ſupport, the comfort and the protection of the whole. But if the feet refuſe

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to ſupport the body, and the hands to defend and provide for it, becauſe they are not eyes and ears, which they are no way calculated to be, they muſt expect to ſhare in the conſequences. Without the eye to direct and the ear to liſten, the hands may take hold of fire, or lean on the point of a ſpear, and the feet may be taken in a ſnare, or run to deſtruction. So if the eyes and ears ſhould diſregard what the hands and feet are doing, or deſpiſe them as mean and contemptible, they may be ſurpriſed to find the bad effects of their inattention, when the body is in a dungeon, and nothing to be heard but the rattling of chains and the groans of miſery, nor any objects to be ſeen but what are loathſome and diſguſting. Thus "the eye cannot ſay unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you." If thoſe who are exalted in life either by property or office, would reflect how wretched their ſituation would be but for the very loweſt order of men—if they would conſider the obligations they are under to the *husbandman*, the *manufacturer*, and the *merchant*, they would reſpect theſe pillars of the ſtate, and be convinced, that it is their intereſt, as well as their duty, to encourage the laborious part of the community, and to be patterns to them of "whatſoever things are lovely—and of good report." The idea which the prophet Iſaiah gives us (Chap. xlix. 23.) of the ruling powers, is very pleaſing, "Kings ſhall be thy nurſing-fathers, and their Queens thy nurſing-mothers." And the ſame idea may be annexed with equal propriety to all rulers and magiſtrates. If by their care and attention, they evidenced that they had the welfare of the people, eſpecially of the poor, at heart, endeavouring to foſter and provide for them; the duty and affection of children would be returned; and the pleaſure ariſing from benevolence in the giver, and that of gratitude in the receiver, would render both happy. But if, inſtead of this, their time ſhould be ſpent in "rioting and drunkenneſs, chambering and wantonneſs;" in gaming, "dreſſing, miſtreſſing, and compliment;" what have they to expect? Profligacy of manners in thoſe who are called great, will quickly contaminate all around them. Vice is infectious, and is generally caught by inferiors from thoſe who move in the higher ſpheres of life. When religion is diſregarded, and conſidered only as ſomething to ſuit the ignorance and ſuperſtition of the vulgar; and when even moral virtue is only regarded to ſave appearances; when temperance and chaſtity

are forced to give place to gluttony and debauchery; and when men of rank treat their inferiors with ſupercilious inſolence, as if they were beings of another ſpecies, what is likely to be the conſequence? The inſurrections, rebellions, and revolutions, recorded in the hiſtories of various countries give the anſwer. A detail of theſe would neither be entertaining nor profitable to a religious aſſembly; but it might be uſeful to public characters of every deſcription, frequently to conſider ſuch hiſtories. They would then ſee that, though other cauſes may have ſometimes produced theſe calamities; yet, they have often been occaſioned by the pride, bigotry, irreligion, immorality, and general miſconduct of thoſe who have had the management of public affairs; not infrequently through the perſuaſions and ſanctimonious artifices of Monks and Friars, and ſuch like inſtruments of miſchief, which ſome (who are, by a figure of ſpeech, called proteſtants) have lately ſtyled the "Miniſters of God."

But whatever the perſonal character of Rulers may be, this does not excuſe the people from diſcharging the duties which they owe them in their civil capacity, as the guardians and miniſters of the law. In whatever country a Chriſtian lives, and whatever be the mode of government, his political ſentiments are determined by the New Teſtament, which does not preſcribe any particular form of government, as of divine right and univerſal obligation. "Regal or imperial authority was moſt common, when thoſe precepts were penned, that relate to this ſubject: yet they may be equally applied to other eſtabliſhed forms." Our duty on this head may be gathered from the following paſſages, without much explanation: Rom. xiii. 1, 2, 5. "Let every ſoul be ſubject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whoſoever therefore reſiſteth the power, reſiſteth the ordinance of God: and they that reſiſt, ſhall receive to themſelves damnation. (That is, judgment, or condemnation.) Wherefore ye muſt needs be ſubject, not only for (fear of) wrath, but alſo for conſcience ſake." So 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. "Submit yourſelves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's ſake: whether it be to the king, as ſupreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are ſent by him for the puniſhment of evil-doers, and for the praiſe of them that do well." The duty we learn from theſe words is, that

Chriſtians

Chriſtians are to be ſubject to the ruling powers, or legal authority, of any nation or people among whom they live. But by ſubjection we muſt not underſtand an abſolute or implicit reſignation of their perſons, legal privileges, or conſciences to the arbitrary deciſions of any man or body of men upon earth. When men require any thing contrary to the commandments of God, ſubmiſſion to them is treaſon againſt the Moſt High. St. Paul repeatedly inſiſted on his privilege as a Roman citizen; and the bleſſed Martyrs who ſealed their teſtimony with their blood, died reſiſting the reigning powers. The reſiſting that is criminal, is the oppoſing any of the magiſtrates, from the higheſt to the loweſt, in the lawful execution of their office. The Apoſtles ſeem particularly to have had in view ſome profeſſors of chriſtianity, who having been Jews before their converſion, had their minds filled with the notion of being ſubject to none but the MESSIAH. Under the influence of this deluſion they pretended that it was unlawful to yield obedience to heathen magiſtrates, and endeavoured to ſpread their opinions, ſo that the church was greatly diſturbed by them. To ſilence theſe, and teach Chriſtians in all ages their duty, the divinely inſpired writers gave theſe directions —"Let every ſoul be ſubject to the higher powers."—*Every ſoul*, not only ſervants, but rich as well as poor: not bad people only, but the truly pious, who enjoy moſt the liberty of the goſpel: not common Chriſtians alone; but miniſters, paſtors, yea apoſtles themſelves, were to be ſubject to the ruling powers. "Submit yourſelf to every ordinance of man for the Lord's ſake."—Be obedient to the civil magiſtrates in all things, conſiſtent with a good conſcience; that is, in all things not contrary to the word of God; for the letter of ſcripture muſt be the rule of conſcience, otherwiſe any enthuſiaſt may plead conſcience, when he is following his own dreams or imaginary viſions, impreſſions, and other deluſions of a diſordered mind. "For the Lord's ſake:" Let not your ſubmiſſion to kings and governors be the conſtrained obedience of ſervile drudges; for whatever heathens or atheiſts may think or do, to you who are Chriſtians, there is one Lord who ruleth over all; conſider your obedience as unto him, and yield it chearfully.

St. Paul urges the obedience of ſervants to their maſters even in common life, from this very motive—"Servants, obey in all things your maſters according to the fleſh; not with eye-ſervice, as men-pleaſers, but with ſingleneſs of heart, fearing God: and whatſoever

ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye ſhall receive the reward of the inheritance; *for ye ſerve the Lord Chriſt.*" (Col. iii. 22—24. Eph. vi. 5—7.) What an unſpeakable privilege is this! To ſee it clearly in ſome degree, only conſider, ſuppoſe the LORD JESUS CHRIST were your maſter, in the common meaning of the word, how would you ſerve him? Suppoſe HE were a King, or any magiſtrate, how would you obey him? Surely a pious mind can be at no loſs for an anſwer. You would reaſon thus—This is the Saviour of loſt mankind; he died for my ſins and roſe again for my juſtification; he is to judge the world at the time appointed: how highly am I honoured to be his ſubject and ſervant; I will ſerve and obey him with all my heart, faithfully and diligently, and on every occaſion. If a Chriſtian would thus obey Jeſus Chriſt were he on earth in perſon, common ſenſe will teach us, that his authority is not leſſened by his being in heaven. And agreeable to the texts laſt quoted, it is the privilege and duty of all Chriſtians to obey Maſters, Magiſtrates, Kings, or any Civil Governors, as freely and ſincerely as they would our Saviour himſelf, for theſe are all under his control and authority; and lawful obedience to them is, in reality, only obeying him. A more ſublime thought on the ſubject could not enter the mind of man.

Another paſſage of Scripture to which we muſt attend is, Matt. xxii. 21. "Render therefore unto Ceſar, the things which are Ceſar's." Ceſar was the common name of the Roman Emperors; and is to be underſtood as repreſentative of the civil Governors of any country. The image of Ceſar being ſtamped upon the current coin, determined his right to receive the tribute money; and the paying tribute, is rendering to Ceſar the things that are Ceſar's. St. Paul expreſsly commands this, (Rom. xiii. 7.) "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due, cuſtom to whom cuſtom." By *tribute* is meant all taxes or duties on perſons or eſtates; and by *custom* all duties upon goods exported or imported. The defrauding Government of any of theſe taxes or duties is the ſame as ſtealing our neighbours' property, or robbing on the high way. Therefore no Smuggler of any kind is ſuffered to be in our ſociety; there being an expreſs rule againſt all ſuch abominable practices. If any *buy or ſell uncuſtomed goods* they are expelled as ſoon as they are known, the ſame as drunkards, thieves, fornicators or any wicked perſons.

Under

Under this head we may obſerve another thing, which the Apoſtle adds (in the ſame verſe) render "fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour." And St. Peter enforces the ſame duty, (1. Pet. ii. 17.) "Fear God. Honour the King." And to ſhew the loyalty of the Miniſters in our connexion, when the point was conſidered, (owing to ſome malevolent men having falſely accuſed ſome of them, as being diſaffected to his Majeſty,) the following minute was drawn up in the conference at London, Auguſt, 1792. and unanimouſly agreed to by the whole body: "What rule ſhall be given concerning our conduct to the civil Government? None of us ſhall, either in writing or converſation, ſpeak lightly or irreverently of the Government under which he lives. We are to obſerve that the oracles of God command us to be ſubject to the higher powers; and that honour to the King is there connected with the fear of God." Indeed had there been no ſuch ſcripture, we as a people, (on many accounts remarkable) have reaſon to love King George, and to be pleaſed with the *civil Government*, for many privileges which we enjoy. We know well that the principles of perſecution, in the minds of ſome, are the ſame they were in Bonner, Laud, and company; and that, as a certain perſon ſaid in a late ſpiteful pamphlet, we "are indebted to the lenity of the conſtitution," for being permitted to worſhip God in our own way. We deſire nothing elſe; and for the degree of religious liberty which we at preſent enjoy, we are thankful. We contraſt our ſituation with former times, and are ſenſible of the difference. We do not look upon ourſelves as called to reform civil governments, or ſpend much of our time in diſputing about ſtate affairs. As far as we know his Majeſty's character, we conceive highly of him, and admire his perſonal virtues; and we have a conſcientious regard for his conſtitutional prerogatives. But, though we believe King George a Chriſtian and a Proteſtant, this is not the ground of our loyalty. We know that heathens and perſecutors, of moſt infamous character, were the reigning powers when the Apoſtles wrote the ſacred ſcriptures; and as thoſe ſcriptures are the foundation of our faith, and the rule of our conduct in all things, we ſhould feel it our duty to be loyal, were a Pagan upon the throne; for, what with ſome is mere policy, is with us a caſe of conſcience. Hence, when St. Paul exhorts,

exhorts, (1 Tim. ii. 1. 2.) "That ſupplications, prayers, interceſſions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; (particularly) for KINGS, and for ALL THAT ARE IN AUTHORITY," we cannot heſitate a moment about our duty. And I am confident there are not people in the world, who pray more earneſtly and conſtantly for King George and his family, than the Methodiſt-Preachers do, as hundreds of thouſands in England alone can teſtify.

It would be ſtrange indeed, if among ſo many there ſhould be no difference of opinion with reſpect to many things of a political nature. Some never give themſelves any concern about ſuch things; others, who are men of great reading and thinking, and who underſtand ſtate affairs, may ſee many things in adminiſtration of which they cannot approve. But what has this to do with their being loyal to the King, and faithful to the conſtitution? Actions ſpeak louder than words: Who ever knew any of our Miniſters, or even private members of our ſociety, concerned in mobs or riots, or any way diſturbing the peace? We endeavour to "lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godlineſs and honeſty." And although as religious people, we cannot but be enemies to war, conſidering it as one of the moſt dreadful ſcourges of Almighty God to a guilty nation; yet, as our principles allow of reſiſtance in defence of ourſelves, our friends, and our legal privileges, ſhould any of our enemies invade the land, we ſhall be found as active in oppoſing them as any of our neighbours.* But we pray for peace and

* I ſhould not have dwelt ſo long on the laſt ſubdiviſion, but that I thought it neceſſary to be explicit on the ſubject; and that it was better to put together what I had to ſay, than to make another diviſion for the purpoſe. At the laſt general Conference of our Miniſters, held at Leeds, we publiſhed a circular letter, dated Auguſt 8, 1793, in anſwer to a circular letter which ſome miſtaken men had publiſhed againſt us. In our letter are the following words—"We hold our Sovereign King George in high eſtimation; we love our country and its conſtitution, and, as far as Chriſtian Miniſters can go conſiſtently with their functions and the oracles of God, will ſupport our King and Country with all we are and have." I ſhould not have mentioned this now, but that ſome illiberal pamphleteers have ſince then, thrown out ſome vile innuendos concerning the Preachers, as if they were not all well affected to government. I know the Preachers as well as any man knows them,

and righteouſneſs to cover the earth, and for the ſpeedy arrival of that period, when men ſhall learn war no more. The government of God ſhall then be reſtored; and all nations ſubmitting chearfully to the authority of our Lord, the government of man will be of uſe no longer; and the various diſtinctions which are now neceſſary to preſerve order, and overrule the wickedneſs and ignorance of men, will be all loſt in the goodneſs and love which will univerſally prevail, and be the habitual diſpoſition of all the inhabitants of the earth. That antient prophecy ſhall then be fulfilled, Mic. iv. 3, 4, (which, by the way, was never properly fulfilled yet) "They ſhall beat their ſwords into plow-ſhares and their ſpears into pruning-hooks: nation ſhall not lift up a ſword againſt nation, neither ſhall they learn war any more." The ſpirit of the firſt Chriſtians at Jeruſalem will then be exemplified by all mankind, and the glory of God be viſible in every countenance.

them, and I know none of them who are diſaffected to either the King or the Conſtitution. I therefore conſider all ſuch inſinuations as mean and artful, and deſigned merely to ſerve a party.

Two things may have led a few very ignorant people to miſtake the ſentiments of our Miniſters: firſt, our great diſlike to the Slave-Trade, the abolition of which we moſt ſincerely deſire. Secondly, our firm attachment to unreſtrained liberty of conſcience, (as mentioned before in this ſermon, p. 11---14.) which our very exiſtence, as a people, compels us to defend. With regard to the firſt, it is well known that the moſt loyal people in the nation, the prime Miniſter himſelf, to his eternal honour, voted for the abolition of the Slave-Trade; an invincible demonſtration that Royalty is not ſupported by that infernal traffic. And reſpecting the ſecond point, would any one inſinuate that Royalty cannot ſtand without the aid of perſecutors? without an execrable act of uniformity, enforced by penal ſanctions? We bleſs God for the civil conſtitution of this country, which ſecures in a tolerable degree, the religious liberty of his Majeſty's ſubjects; hundreds of thouſands of whom demonſtrate, that they are not leſs loyal becauſe they dare to think for themſelves on religious topics, and will not be implicitly led into the ditch of perdition, by men, who know not the Scriptures, nor the power of God: (Matt. xv. 14. and 22. 29.) But ſome are ſo ignorant, and others ſo bigotted, or blinded by their own intereſt, that they cannot ſee, or are not willing to allow, the difference betwixt a ſteady attachment to our King and Conſtitution, and the

nance. Till then, all attempts to equalize men, in reſpect to the ranks of life and the offices of government, (be the mode of government ever ſo popular) will prove fooliſh and ineffectual.

III. The laſt thing to be conſidered is, wherein mankind may, or may not be equal.

1. It is allowed by all men of reaſon, that HAPPINESS is the object of univerſal purſuit. However they may differ in their opinions concerning the means of obtaining it, there are few who would be bold enough to diſpute about its being the end. Waving for the preſent all common-place declamation concerning the emptineſs and vanity of the world, which almoſt every one talks of, and very few conſider, it is certain there can be no ſolid and laſting happineſs without God. "Happy is that people whoſe God is the Lord:" the people who are reconciled to God by faith in Chriſt Jeſus; who have the love of God ſhed abroad in their

the giving up of Reaſon and Conſcience to men who pay little regard to either, or they would not deſire, no nor accept of ſuch an offering. King George the ſecond knew the difference, when he declared, "No man in my dominions ſhall be perſecuted on account of religion while I ſit on the throne." And he kept his word. Nor has there been any proper perſecution by royal authority, in Great Britain or Ireland, ſince his preſent Majeſty has reigned. It is true, ſome of our Preachers have been cruelly beaten and impriſoned, and our friends have been abuſed and fined; and the goods of ſome of them have been ſeized and ſold, when they could not pay the fines which were exacted from them for hearing preaching in unlicenſed places; and this was undoubtedly a ſort of perſecution: but I am perſuaded, King George would never have countenanced ſuch proceedings, had the caſes been laid before him. No, moſt of our ſufferings as a people, have been either directly or indirectly, owing to a deſcription of men who ought to have availed themſelves of the labours of the Methodiſt-Preachers, and to have encouraged them all they could, had it only been for the ſake of the poor; inſtead of extorting penalties, by enforcing Acts which were intended for very different purpoſes. See Mr. Weſley's Works, and his Life by Dr. Coke and Mr. Moore, pages, 247, 497, 450. John Nelſon's Journal, and the Lives of many of the Preachers, in the Methodiſts' Magazine, and various other accounts, which are not yet put regularly together. See alſo Mr. Benſon's "Defence of the Methodiſts, in five Letters," to the Rev. Dr. Tatham. And "A farther Defence of the Methodiſts," by the ſame able writer, in Letters to the Rev. Mr. Ruſſel, Curate of Perſhore. Sold at our Chapels,

their hearts by the Holy Ghoſt which is given to all believers; in conſequence of their iniquities being forgiven and their ſins covered: All ſuch people as have their hearts ſprinkled from an evil conſcience, feeling the peace which paſſeth all underſtanding,* they are happy, and can uſe the language of Jeremiah, (Lam. iii. 24.) "The Lord is my portion, ſaith my ſoul, therefore will I hope in him." Thus to have a well grounded hope, in oppoſition to deſpondency and a gloomy apprehenſion of what is to come; to have peace with God, inſtead of that ſenſe of the divine diſpleaſure which always accompanies guilt; in a word, to enjoy the preſence of God in a humble mind as our ſatisfying portion, is to be truly happy. There is an eſſential difference betwixt pleaſure and pain, and betwixt the good things of this world and the evil; our Lord himſelf allows the diſtinction (Luke xvi. 25.) And what man would be believed, ſhould he declare ever ſo gravely, that it made no difference to him whether he had the conveniences of life or not? But this does not weaken the argument before us. Holineſs is eſſential to happineſs, for even a heathen could diſcover that "no wicked man is happy;" and no man, I preſume, will affirm that titles of diſtinction, or wealth, or power, are in the leaſt neceſſary to holineſs. Nor will any (who believe the ſcriptures) aſſert that poverty or afflictions need be any hinderance thereto. St. Paul declares that "not many wiſe men after the fleſh, not many mighty, not many noble are called." (1. Cor. i. 26.) And St. James ſpeaks to the ſame purpoſe, "Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God choſen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promiſed to them that love him." (Jam. ii. 5.) And with reſpect to afflictions, they are ſo far from being an hinderance to goodneſs, or holineſs, that they are neceſſary, as means, if not always to its beginning, at leaſt, to its being completed. So David, (Pſal. cxix. 67, 71.) "Before I was afflicted I went aſtray, but now have I kept thy word. It is good for me that I have been afflicted: that I might learn thy ſtatutes." So alſo St. Paul. (Heb. xii. 9, 10.) "We have had fathers of our

 fleſh,

* If the reader pleaſe, he may compare the following ſcriptures, which contain the ſubſtance of what is mentioned above: Pſal. cxliv. 15. 2 Cor. v. 18---20. Rom. v. 5. Rom. iv. 7. Heb. x. 22. Phil. iv. 7.

flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the father of spirits and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us, for their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

To put the matter in another point of view, consider, why is God happy? That he is so, will not be denied. Certainly the happiness of the Eternal God, does not arise from any thing which he has created. If the great globe and all its inhabitants, if the sun, moon and stars, and the whole visible creation were annihilated; yea, if men and angels, and all things that ever began to be were lost and "swallowed up in the wide womb of uncreated night," the happiness of God would be undiminished—would be the same it has been from Eternity. Nor can the obedience and adoration of enraptured millions of intelligent spirits add, in the smallest degree, to the perfect felicity of the ever blessed God. The happiness of God flows from the goodness of his nature and the harmony of his attributes. In other words, God is happy because he is holy. And no human being is properly happy, but in proportion to the degree in which he is a partaker of the holiness of God. Our happiness must be entirely independant on any creature. It must resemble the happiness of him from whom it is derived, and the participation of whose nature alone can qualify for, and raise the human spirit to the divine enjoyment. And surely the being partakers of this has nothing to do with our condition in the world. It is obtained through the mediation of Jesus Christ and the assistance of the Divine Spirit, by prayer and faith. And humiliation, self-denial, mortification or taking up the cross, and all kinds of temptations, losses and afflictions are by the providence of God rendered subservient to the increase of this inestimable blessing, in those who are in earnest to save their souls. There can be no substitute for holiness, no religious commutation, or exceeding in some duties in order to excuse some sins. There is but one happiness; and one holiness is essentially necessary to its being enjoyed, and mankind may or may not be equal therein.

2. Protection from danger is not confined to any description of men as to their outward circumstances. The Almighty governs all the concerns of the universe; and all good men are objects of his

his particular providence. (Matt. x. 29, 30.) "Are not two ſparrows ſold for a farthing? and one of them ſhall not fall to the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." Men therefore may, or may not be equal in reſpect to ſafety. How many great men, yea, princes and kings, have been taken from the earth by untimely deaths, while millions of private characters have been preſerved in the moſt imminent danger! The hiſtorical books of ſcripture will furniſh abundance of inſtances to exemplify this obſervation: and indeed ſo will the hiſtories of all nations. A man is not ſecure becauſe he has a guard around him, if he be a bad man: nor is he left to what is termed caſualty, let appearances be ever ſo threatening, if he take God into his account. The poor and the rich, the high and the low, are ſafe or otherwiſe, on conſiderations totally unconnected with their temporal ſituation. It is no part of my preſent deſign to diſcuſs the doctrines of *fate* and *chance*, I equally renounce both, as equally excluding God from the government of the world. I only mean to ſhew that the ſafety or danger of any individual does not depend on the trifling difference betwixt his worldly affairs and thoſe of others.

Thus we ſee that happineſs and ſafety are the portion of accountable creatures, in which they may or may not be equal, without any reference to birth, property, or any of the diſtinctions of human life, or the regulations of civil economy.

From all that has been ſaid we may obſerve, as all men are equal in points of the greateſt importance, how little room there is for vain glory on the one ſide, or diſcontent on the other. Let us then all endeavour to fill up our place, and ſerve our generation in the beſt way we can, without oſtentation and without envy. And as there is not a poſſibility of men being equal in all reſpects while the world continues in its preſent ſtate, let each of us take care that we do not go out of the calling of Providence. We may be happy and ſafe, by a proper attention to Jeſus Chriſt and the Eternal Spirit, and to the duties and promiſes of the goſpel.

As to the *National Faſt*, in order to render it generally efficacious, there muſt be a NATIONAL REFORMATION. For, what will it avail us to abſtain a little while from our food, buſineſs and recreations, if we continue to go on in our ſins, and

diſregard the word of God? Will the Moſt High be moved to bleſs and proſper ſwearers and curſers? fornicators and adulterers? effeminate and unclean perſons? thieves, covetous, drunkards, gluttons, revilers and extortioners? Perſons who indulge malice, envy, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, ſtrife, ſeditions, hereſies? people who are deceitful, malignant, whiſperers, backbiters, haters of God, proud, boaſters, diſobedient to parents, implacable, unmerciful? ſuch as are liars, perjured perſons, men-ſtealers, unholy, profane? or ſuch as have the form of godlineſs, but deny the power thereof?* Are theſe the people whom "the Holy One of Iſrael" will regard, becauſe they occaſionally repeat a few prayers, and are leſs vicious than uſual for a few hours? And Oh! how do theſe abound in this kingdom! I highly approve of the conduct of Government in appointing national faſts, and obſerve them moſt conſcientiouſly: It is a public acknowledgment of God. But unleſs we break off our ſins by repentance, and ſeek the Lord with all our hearts, the God of truth declares, "When ye ſpread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear."† Let us then by the grace of God, "ceaſe to do evil, and learn to do well," ſo will the Lord be entreated for us, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we periſh not."

* See Rom. i. 28—32. 1 Cor. vi. 10. Gal. v. 19—21. 1 Tim. i. 9, 10. 2 Tim. iii. 5.

† Iſa. i. 15. See alſo Iſa. lviii. and Prov. i. 20—23. Jon. iii. 9.

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